

**HOMES FOR LIFE**

**ALLOCATIONS AND NOMINATIONS**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE AND GUIDANCE  
NOTES**

**UPDATED SEPT 2009**

## **BACKGROUND**

Homes for Life is part of the City's programme for meeting the Government's agenda in supporting older people to live at home for as long as possible. This type of housing provision can be classified as a new model for life into older age where the residents will be encouraged to participate in the 'life' of the scheme but retaining their own front door. The ability to have care available over a 24 hour period, based upon assessed individual need promotes independent living for as long as possible.

## **OBJECTIVE**

This group is responsible for ensuring that the rented and shared ownership properties within extra care accommodation are allocated within the extra care allocation criteria outlined in the Council's allocations policy.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The functions and responsibilities of the Allocations Panel are supportive to the Homes for Life: Older People's Programme:-

- Oversee the allocation of the extra care housing scheme rented and shared ownership units
- Comply with the Council's allocations policy
- Comply with the Association's allocations policy
- Ensure that commitments under the Nominations Agreement are met
- Undertake housing, support and care assessments
- Ensure the process minimises void periods and rent loss
- Ensure that records and decisions relating to allocations are effectively recorded
- Share applicant information relating to their application for extra care, in accordance with data protection and Human Rights requirements
- Treat all applications fairly and in accordance with equal rights.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

This group will comprise of local authority officers and officers from the housing association partner with equal representation. The membership is outlined in the partnership agreement.

Decisions will be made on a consensus basis, with decisions not being incompatible with relevant advice of council officers on financial and / or compliance matters.

## **MEETINGS**

Will be held monthly or more frequently if required, due to a lead up to scheme opening. If no nominations are to be made, and there are no items for discussion the planned meeting will be cancelled. Minutes will be kept up to date and distributed within 7 working days of the meeting taking place. Any issues arising from the minutes will be taken within 'matters arising' at the following meeting. Accuracy of the minutes will be agreed at the following meeting.

<b>ALLOCATIONS PANEL GUIDANCE NOTES</b>
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### **The Allocations and Lettings Process**

The council has 100% nomination rights at the time of the first lettings and in perpetuity for the rented and shared ownership accommodation in the scheme. This is to ensure that the Council's Adult services are able to undertake an assessment of care / support needs prior to an applicant being nominated.

Those applying for rent and / or shared ownership will apply to the Association and to the Council's housing register.

### **Extra Care Allocations Criteria:-**

Applicant must be aged 55 or over (any partner will be aged 50 or over). Age is the initial qualifying criteria, however, someone below this age with a long term disability will be considered. Couples are eligible to apply where one or both meet the following criteria:-

They must have a care / support need :-

- A combination of housing, support and / or care needs, or are awaiting discharge from residential / nursing/ hospital or other care settings, as identified by an Adult Services assessment of need
- Have a positive attitude towards retaining or regaining their independence
- Require assistance with their daily living tasks and / or personal care as identified by Adult Services assessment, and / or
- Have care and support needs due to a range of difficulties or disabilities as identified by an Adult Services assessment
- Be an older carer with son, daughter or dependant with a learning / physical disability who requires care and support identified by an Adult Services assessment.

### **Local Connection**

Due to the Council having an open housing register an applicant does not need to have a local connection to apply for housing in the City. However for extra care accommodation an applicant must ordinarily be a resident of Sunderland. Applications will be considered from out of City applicants. This may be, if the applicant has existing connections with the City which may assist their current or future care needs.

### **Allocations Panel**

The Chair of the panel will receive all administration relating to rented or shared ownership applications for extra care accommodation. The Chair will collate the information for each application and make sure it is available for the next meeting of the Panel. The Chair will be a representative from the RSL partner.

The remit of the panel includes:-

- Assessing new applicants
- Determining eligibility for Extra Care Allocations Criteria
- Confirming the housing and support needs of applicants, the suitability and sustainability of current care arrangements and / or current accommodation
- Assessing the ability to manage in extra care accommodation
- Confirming the care package required
- Confirming the dependency level
- Monitoring care and support availability
- Deciding how to deal with complex applications
- Considering any other issues relating to health and wellbeing
- Prioritising applicants for re housing and / or considering potential alternatives
- Considering any exceptional circumstances, eg homelessness or risk from abuse
- Decide whether to suspend an applicant
- Decide whether an offer has been unreasonably refused
- Review any existing applications previously accepted on the housing register
- Review the order of priority of the applicants on the register according to their level of need and support for both rented and sales
- Allocate vacant property for rent
- Review / monitor existing tenants regarding their level of need or any tenancy issues.

An allocation will be determined by the Panel, after consideration has been given to:-

- the outcome of the joint assessment process
- If they meet extra care eligibility criteria as set out above
- the information contained within the housing application
- the outcome of a care assessment carried out by Adult Services
- each application and decide if applicants can be nominated for the next available tenancy
- appropriate applicants to be provided with an alternative housing / care option

The Chair will notify all decisions to the applicants / their advocates in writing, including rights of appeal against unsuccessful applications.

### **Dependency Levels**

The Panel should ensure wherever possible, to maintain a balanced community within the scheme.

The dependency levels have been divided as shown below. These figures are to be used as a guideline only:-

- 30% of residents who have supported housing needs
- 30% of residents who have moderate care needs
- 40% of residents who have high care needs

Residents living in extra care housing will usually have care and support needs related to social / health difficulties, including disability; frailty; dementia / cognitive impairment; mental ill health; learning disabilities. The Panel will endeavour to enable applicants to enter extra care accommodation at an optimum time for them e.g early stages of dementia; recovery from depression; when leaving hospital or in order to prevent an admission into care (which may be as a result of a longstanding physical or mental health condition, such as dementia).

Applicants may currently be living in residential care or sheltered housing but may benefit from extra care. A more independent lifestyle may be facilitated for some, whereas the provision of regular overnight care or a continually supportive community will be key factors for others.

Residents may need flexibility in the provision of care services and that residents' care needs will change over time. Care plans will be compiled to reflect ways of meeting their needs in the scheme, to provide maximum independence, autonomy, dignity and choice for the individual.

### **Maximum Dependency**

If a resident's care and support needs alter due to medical or cognitive impairment, such that they require very frequent or 24 hour nursing, beyond the level of the Community Nursing Service and their behaviour or condition means that their needs cannot be adequately/safely met in extra care accommodation, then all agencies will work to find suitable alternative accommodation and care for the resident. Such action must be in accordance with their wishes.

The above criteria will not be used as grounds for possession of the tenancy.

An applicant will not usually have, upon entering the scheme, or shortly after entering:-

- A level of physical or mental frailty exceeding that which can reasonably be met within the community, and / or
- A level of physical or mental frailty which is likely to cause serious disruption or risk to other residents, including
  - Persistently intruding on others
  - Physical or verbal aggression

## **Prioritising Flats**

To allocate a property the following must be considered:-

- Establish why a particular floor is required
- Establish why a particular flat is required
- Establish why a flat with full disability provision is required

A home visit and care needs assessment must be carried out by Adult Services with Housing Options as appropriate, before any property offer is made.

## **Ground floor priority**

The following consideration must be given to applicants with poor mobility to enable them to continue to visit the laundry, dining room, Court Manager's Office and other amenities:-

- Flats nearest to the amenities to be allocated to the above applicants
- Applicants with phobias to lifts
- Applicants requiring quick access for court manager / social and health care staff
- Residents with severe visual impairment / blindness

## **First / second floor priority:**

- Applicant would feel / or would be more vulnerable on the ground floor

If a property has been adapted / converted for medical / disability requirements consideration will be given to those applicants demonstrating the need for those aids and adaptations.

## **Allocations Panel Meetings**

Meeting will be held monthly or more frequently if required, due to a lead up to scheme opening. If no nominations are to be made the planned meeting will be cancelled. In the event of an emergency, any member can convene a meeting by giving the other members 48 hours notice, or alternatively carry out a virtual meeting by e:mail or telephone. All members must be in agreement with the proposal.

At each monthly meeting, the Panel will recommend at least the top three applicants in priority need and categorise them according to their level of need for each level of care. A housing register application form must be completed before an offer can be made.

All panel meetings will be recorded, with a copy held confidentially on file at the scheme, taking into account data protection.

## **Equal Opportunities**

The Allocations Panel is committed to providing housing services to the whole community and will not discriminate against any applicant on the basis of their ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or race.

## **Offering Accommodation**

An offer of accommodation is where we have a vacant property and have contacted an applicant in writing to see if they want to be re housed there. It is important to match the applicant's requirements with the property on offer. The joint visit to the applicant upon their application for extra care accommodation, enables housing officers to understand the housing need of the applicant alongside the support and care needs identified by Adult Services.

The Association will make offers of tenancy within two weeks of a rented property becoming available for rent. Should the Panel not confirm nominations to the Association, then they may consider their own waiting list to identify suitable applicants.

If the applicant refuses three reasonable offers, their application will be suspended for one year from the date of the third offer.

**Refusals:** The reason for refusals will be recorded on the expression of interest list held by the Association and on Council housing register records. All documentation and information will be kept with the housing register application by the Association.

## **Complaints and Appeals**

All complaints and appeals will be processed through the housing association's own complaints process. The complaint may be referred to the City Council if it relates to a Council process / policy or procedure.

## **The Appeals Process**

Applicants will be entitled to appeal against decisions made by the Allocations Panel. All appeals will be referred to the housing association Manager. The Allocations Panel will be consulted on any appeals made and their views will be taken into consideration. The Housing Association Manager will inform the appellant regarding the appeal decision and how this decision was reached.

This appeal process is distinct from, and does not affect in any way, the right of applicants to request a review by the local housing authority under section 167(4A)(d) of the Housing Act 1996."

## **Process for Extra Care – Rented**

The allocations process usually starts approximately 6 months prior to completion of the scheme.

Anyone wanting to apply for extra care accommodation will initially complete a 'self assessment application' form. This identifies the applicant's care and support requirements to outline the issues in advance of Older Person Services undertaking a home visit. This self assessment form can be obtained from the applicant's own Care Manager / Social Worker; housing services; the Association or via the Council's website.

The self assessment form is returned to the Association and at this stage is added to the 'Expression of Interest' (EOI) list. The form is copied and sent to Adult Services enabling them to undertake the care assessment. The care assessment outcome is then fed back to a future allocations panel.

Applications for rented accommodation may be identified from the Council's own housing register from existing applications requesting older person's accommodation in the area in which the extra care scheme is located. Adult Services will also undertake local area reviews to identify people within the local area, known to them, who may benefit from extra care accommodation. Self assessment applications will be completed by Adult Services staff at this stage, if appropriate.

A housing register application form is required by the Association to enable the offer to be made. Housing Options will check the housing register to establish whether an application is already registered, if not, a home visit can be arranged to complete the housing register application form.

The Association are responsible for the update of the expressions of interest list on a weekly basis. This will be shared with all members of the Allocations Panel each week with an updated copy provided to the monthly Allocations Panel meeting.

If the applicant is found to be clearly not eligible for extra care at the stage of assessment, Adult Services will advise the applicant in writing. All other applications with their assessments will be taken to the Allocations Panel for an eligibility decision to be made.

On completion of assessment an outline of the application and care assessment will be forwarded to the Allocations Panel for them to decide whether the person is eligible. The Association will contact the applicant outlining the decision of the Panel.

If applicants wish to remain on the housing register the Housing Options Team will pursue alternative accommodation options. If they do not wish to

remain on the City Council's housing register they will be removed as requested.

### **Transfers within the extra care accommodation**

There could be reasons why an applicant may apply for a transfer from one flat to another as a vacancy arises. Such applications will be discussed at the Allocations Panel to decide whether a potential transfer will benefit the applicant. If a vacancy arises and the Court Manager is aware that this may benefit an existing resident who has not applied for a transfer, they may approach the resident / their advocate. This situation may arise if an adapted property becomes available which may meet the needs of a resident who is living in property without adaptation. The decision to agree a transfer is made by the Allocations Panel.

Transfer applications may be suspended if:-

- There are management concerns which need resolving
- Where the transfer will result in additional costs to Housing 21, for example where the resident has carried out unauthorised alterations to the flat

### **Process for Extra Care – Shared Ownership**

All applications and queries in relation to shared ownership are filtered by Housing 21 and are then recorded onto the EOI list upon receipt of the self assessment application following the same process as for 'rented'.

If shared ownership or outright sale is indicated by the applicant a referral will be made by Housing 21 to their Sales Manager who will then visit to discuss the options.

Sunderland City Council can nominate people for the shared ownership apartments up to eight weeks from the start of the sale and marketing process (start date to be provided to the Council by the Association).

If the applicant is found to be clearly not eligible for extra care at the stage of assessment, Adult Services will advise the applicant in writing. All other applications with their assessments will be taken to the Allocations Panel for an eligibility decision to be made.

On completion of assessment an outline of the application and care assessment will be forwarded to the Allocations Panel for them to decide whether the person is eligible to be allocated a shared ownership unit. The Association will contact the applicant outlining the decision of the Panel. If successful they will be advised that the Association's selling agent will be in contact with them regarding the purchase. They will also be sent a copy of the tenancy agreement and service charges for their information in advance of signing any paperwork.

If the applicant requires financial advice to support them with the sale of their own home, or the purchase of their shared ownership home, the Council can provide them with details of a financial advisor if required. This advice must be provided to the applicant whether the financial advice is provided by the Association's own arrangements or by the Council independent advisors.

On approval by the Allocations Panel – the Association's selling agent will liaise with the applicant to proceed with the sale.

The Association will provide a monthly update at the Allocations Panel confirming purchaser's name, sale status (including tenure type). This information will be minuted at the Panel by the Chair of the Panel.

The Association reserves the right to offer shared ownership sale units to applicants on their own housing register if no suitable applicants have been identified within eight weeks of the beginning of the sales and marketing period.

### **Re sale of Shared Ownership Apartments**

The Association will advise the Council when a property is available for resale. The Council and the Association will identify nominees from the housing register and provide the nominations within 7 days of receipt of notification. The nominee must have a completed housing and care / support assessment. If there is no suitable nominee, the housing association may offer the property to an applicant from their own waiting list. Where no nomination can be made, the vendor will be free to place the property on the market for sale with an estate agent of their own choice. Any applicant must meet the eligibility criteria.

### **Process for Extra Care – Outright sale**

All applications and queries in relation to outright sale are passed to the Sales Manager who will visit the applicant to discuss their application.

The Sales Manager will carry out a basic check to ensure that the applicant is over the age of 55 and can afford the property.

If there are concerns about the person's ability to manage within extra care, due to their high care Adult Services will identify whether the support can be provided within the scheme. The outcome of this decision will be communicated to the Sales Manager by Adult Services.

If a decision is made by the applicant to go ahead with the outright sale and they require care and support within the accommodation then a referral to Adult Services will be made enabling them to undertake an assessment approximately four weeks prior to completion.

If any applicants are not successful with their application for outright purchase they may wish to apply for shared ownership or rental properties. If this is the case then they will need to make application to the Association.